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# Hairy Old Man

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## HAIRY OLD MAN

1.

My shadow's love of drama keeps me up at night.  
His understudy lives in a black box, and together  
we suffer my insomnia. Sun curdles him like  
sour milk, but he slinks off before he's a puddle.

When I'm angered, he sculpts me a ghostwriter's  
bust out of clouds no bigger than a man's hand.  
Sequined buttons of his coat glisten like the  
snake scales in Eden.

2.

He knocks at my cottage every evening with his  
homespun mock-tragicomedies, his tales of forest  
alchemy. Tongue lolling, he snarls when the  
moon is out. His mouth is a storm front breathing  
out clouds.

"In *your* philosophy," he sidles in the door, whisking  
his tail against my knees, "I'm the ghostwriter's  
bust!" "Not exactly," I frown. He's a hairy old  
man with rotted teeth (a wolf in old tweed) who  
offers, from his coat pocket, paper cuttings, then  
asks what I see.

"A clip artist's cottage industry!"

Flowers for the color-blind, he calls them, sunned  
by the moon into blossom.

"Eat your heart out!" he smiles.

On the darkest days, my shadow prances in the garden, laughing and cavorting with my heart-breaks.

3.

Days pass as his breath fouts, his back legs lame. His incisors fall out, and I tell him, "You're no magician as you fancy yourself, but a wolf man with B-movie tantrums!"

His gnarled hands rattle the period pieces on my mantle and the ghostwriter's bust. "You'll never guess my alias!" he taunts, loping about with his nose up, wheezing, keeling over.

I drag him out by his paws. His nostrils flare, like Chiron in Aries, eyes closed from the undertow of arteries. His heart failures are a nuisance these days. My shadow never dies, he only faints!